



The ISC Newsletter

International Society of Cryptozoology

Spring 1986
Vol. 5, No. 1

Editor
J. Richard Greenwell

The *ISC Newsletter* is an official publication of the International Society of Cryptozoology, and is published for Society members and Institutional subscribers. Membership is \$25 annually; Institutional subscriptions are \$35. Membership and subscription inquiries and correspondence, should be addressed to ISC, Box 43070, Tucson, AZ 85733, USA; (602) 884-8369.

News media services may quote up to 250 words from this publication, provided that the source is given.

© 1986 International
Society of Cryptozoology

OFFICERS

Bernard Heuvelmans, *President*
Center for Cryptozoology
Le Bugue, France

Roy P. Mackal, *Vice President*
Young Bldg., 307
The University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.

J. Richard Greenwell, *Secretary*
International Society of Cryptozoology
P.O. Box 43070
Tucson, Arizona 85733, U.S.A.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dmitri Bayanov
Darwin Museum
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

Eric Buffetaut
Laboratory of Vertebrate and
Human Paleontology
University of Paris VI
Paris, France

Joseph F. Gennaro
Department of Biology
New York University
New York, New York, U.S.A.

Philippe Janvier
Institute of Paleontology
National Museum of Natural History
Paris, France

Grover S. Krantz
Department of Anthropology
Washington State University
Pullman, Washington, U.S.A.

Paul H. LeBlond
Department of Oceanography
The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Nikolai Spassov
Department of Mammals
National Museum of Natural History
Bulgarian Academy of Science
Sofia, Bulgaria

Phillip V. Tobias
Department of Anatomy
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg, South Africa

Leigh M. Van Valen
Department of Biology
The University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.

Forrest G. Wood
Biosciences Department
Naval Ocean Systems Center
U.S. Department of the Navy
San Diego, California, U.S.A.

Zhou Guoxing
Beijing Natural History Museum
Beijing, China

George R. Zug
Division of Amphibians and Reptiles
National Museum of Natural History
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

ISSN 0741-5362

ONZA SPECIMEN OBTAINED— IDENTITY BEING STUDIED



A female Onza shot in January of 1986 by Andres Rodriguez before dissection at Mexico's Regional Diagnostic Laboratory of Animal Pathology, Mazatlan, Sinaloa. It is the first specimen made available to science since the shooting of the Shirk Onza in 1938, which is now lost. The animal is more gracile than a puma, with longer limbs. Comparisons with limb bones of female pumas and electrophoresis of Onza and puma tissues will indicate genetic and evolutionary relationships. (ISC photo.)

The Winter, 1985, *Newsletter* contained an article entitled "Two New Onza Skulls Found." The Onza is a Mexican cat, about the size and coloration of a puma, *Felis concolor*, but said to be more gracile, longer-legged, more aggressive, and rarer. It is reported by local Mexican peasants and ranchers to inhabit the vast and rugged Sierra Madre Occidental mountain range of northwestern Mexico, in the states of Sinaloa and Sonora.

In a striking and unexpected development, an Onza was shot by a Mexican rancher in early January, 1986, and through a fortuitous series of circumstances, the animal was preserved and the event brought to the attention of American investigators, who were then able to conduct an on-site examination and dissection of the specimen.

The cat was shot on the night of January 1, 1986, by Andres

Rodriguez Murillo, who owns the small La Higuera Podrida ranch, in the San Ignacio District of Sinaloa. Mr. Rodriguez was deer hunting at night with Ricardo Zamora, about 4 kilometers from his ranch house (the area is located in a valley behind the Cerro del Perico [Parrot Mountain]). It was about 10:30 p.m. when they observed the glowing eyes of a large animal, which they first took to be a deer (reflecting eyes are easily observable at night when an area is illuminated with a lantern). The outline of the animal, about 50 feet distant, indicated a low, crouching position, like that of a large cat, and its eyes seemed smaller but brighter than those of a deer. Mr. Rodriguez, fearing that the animal might be a jaguar about to charge him, took careful aim and shot it.

Upon inspection, the hunters concluded that the cat was not a jaguar, and it looked different

from a puma. Mr. Rodriguez, who is not an expert hunter nor very knowledgeable about wildlife, remembered that several months before some gringos from Arizona (Richard Greenwell and Robert Marshall) had visited the area and had expressed an interest in unusual cats (see the above-mentioned article in the Winter, 1985, Newsletter). They therefore decided to take the "beast," as they called it, back to the ranch, and to alert another rancher, Manuel Vega, who had met the Americans.

Rodriguez and Zamora made it back to La Higuera Podrida by 1 a.m., and word was sent to Mr. Vega, whose own small ranch is several miles away. Mr. Vega, an experienced hunter, went to the Rodriguez ranch in the middle of the night to examine the "beast," and immediately identified it as an Onza. He had examined an Onza killed by his late father, Jesus Vega, about 10 years earlier, and he stated that the new cat was almost identical to that one. (It was the skull of the cat Mr. Vega's father had shot that had been loaned to Mr. Greenwell the previous October, and is now known as the Vega skull.)

At daybreak, Mr. Vega made his way to Coyotitan, a village near the large San Miguel Ranch, owned by the Urquijo family. Ricardo Urquijo, Jr., who has interested himself in the Onza for some time (and who had loaned the Vega skull to Mr. Greenwell) was away in Los Moches selling cattle, so Mr. Vega spoke to his father, Ricardo Urquijo, Sr., the patriarch of the Urquijo family (and former mayor of Mazatlan). Mr. Urquijo, Sr., telephoned his son, who recommended getting the specimen immediately to Mazatlan (about a 2-hour drive), where it could be frozen.

Mr. Urquijo, Sr., who had also met the visiting Americans the previous October, immediately sent an employee with Mr.

Vega to retrieve the specimen from the Rodriguez ranch, and, that afternoon, it was taken to Mazatlan by Rafael Urquijo, another of his sons, where it was placed in the freezers of a commercial fishery company owned by the Coppel family, friends of the Urquijos. The time between the death of the animal and the freezing of its body was calculated to be about 17 hours, with about half of that period at night--and in the dry season, when it is less hot. Consequently, the specimen was in excellent condition when it was frozen.

Upon returning to the San Miguel Ranch, Mr. Urquijo, Jr., called Mr. Greenwell in Arizona to inform him of the events and to ask for collaboration and assistance in studying the animal. Mr. Greenwell was about to leave on a trip abroad, so planning for a dissection had to wait until the end of January. Greenwell teamed up with Troy Best, a zoologist at the University of New Mexico, in Albuquerque--who has recently measured the approximately 1,600 puma skulls in U.S. collections--and different strategies were studied.

The first plan considered was to return to the United States with the specimen, and dissect it at the University of Arizona, in Tucson. However, a Mexican scientific export permit would be required, which is extremely difficult to obtain at the present time, particularly since the devastating Mexico City earthquake, which disrupted much official paperwork. After reviewing the requirements of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Customs Service, and despite the puma not being listed as an endangered species, it was decided to do the dissection in Mexico, and to take only tissues and bones into the United States on scientific loan.

Accompanying Mr. Greenwell

and Dr. Best to Mexico was Ned Gentz, a graduate student at the University of New Mexico who specializes in the analytic technique of electrophoresis. The team arrived in Mazatlan on February 19, and met Mr. Urquijo, Jr., Mr. Vega, and Mr. Rodriguez, who had all traveled south to Mazatlan to meet the team and observe the dissection. On the morning of February 20, the entire group proceeded to the Regional Diagnostic Laboratory of Animal Pathology, an agency of Mexico's federal Ministry of Agriculture, which cooperated with the U.S. team by providing the facilities for the dissection.

Upon inspection, the cat, a female, appeared to be as described by the native people. It had a remarkably gracile body, with long, slender legs and a long tail. The ears also seemed very long for a puma (about 100 mm.), and small horizontal stripes were found on the inside of its forelimbs, which, as far as has been determined to date, are not found in puma. Well-developed mammae were observed, and its age was determined to be at least 4 years. It weighed about 27 kg. (in life, prior to freezing, it probably weighed a little more), compared to a range of from 36 to 60 kg. in adult female pumas. Its total length, at 186 cm., fell within the normal range of female pumas of from 150 to 233 cm. The tail, however, was 73 cm. in length, very long for a female puma of comparable size; the range in female pumas is from 53 cm. to 81 cm.

A large wound was visible on a rear leg, which Mr. Rodriguez and Mr. Vega believed had been the result of a confrontation with a jaguar. (Mr. Vega had been trying to shoot a jaguar the night before the Onza was shot, but, when observed, the jaguar behaved erratically, leading Mr. Vega to suspect at that time that it had been in a fight. As far as is known,

pumas avoid jaguars and do not confront them.)

Extensive photography and measuring was done prior to the dissection, which was also photographed and videotaped. Upon dissection, the specimen was found to be in perfect condition, with no loss of organic or biochemical material. The animal had been a remarkably healthy individual, and there was very little evidence of disease or parasites in the liver or anywhere else. It contained a modest but adequate amount of body fat, indicating that the animal was naturally slender, and not simply a malnourished puma. It had a normal reproductive system--discounting some local beliefs that the Onza is the sterile hybrid offspring of pumas and jaguars--and it had, in fact, given birth some time previously. Deer hooves were found in the stomach, providing evidence of its last meal.

The major organs were preserved, as were the intestinal tract and a front and rear foot. The entire pancreas was brought back to the United States for insulin studies at the University of Chicago, and tissue samples of heart, kidney, liver, and muscle were preserved in small vials for electrophoresis analysis at the University of New Mexico. Blood and feces were also preserved, as were hairs from different body parts. The hairs will be analyzed microscopically and comparatively with puma and cheetah hairs at the University of Arizona.

Also loaned to the American investigators was a fair amount of osteological material, namely, the skull--now known as the Rodriguez skull--the scapula, some vertebrae, the pelvis, and a set of limb bones: a humerus, an ulna, a radius, a femur, a tibia, and a fibula. Very preliminary indications--based on comparisons with bones of three female pumas available in Tucson



Troy Best, a University of New Mexico zoologist, about to cut open the specimen. (ISC photo.)

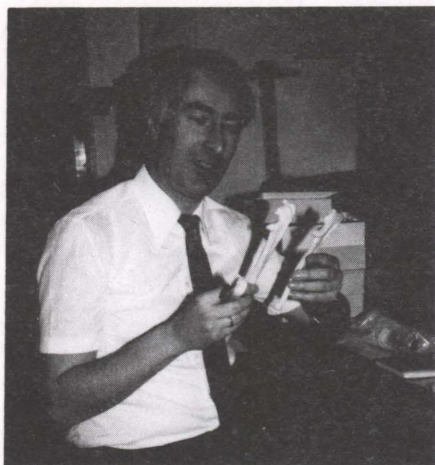
and Albuquerque--indicate that the Onza limb bones are, in fact, longer than those of puma, and they appear in length to be more like those of robust, adult male pumas weighing from 2 to 3 times as much. While these data are still speculative, Best and Greenwell suspect that a new species may be involved.

Further research will take a two-pronged approach, one osteological and the other biochemical. The osteological component involves comparing the Onza skull measurements to approximately 32,300 puma skull measurements taken by Troy Best (1,700 skulls with 19 measurements per skull), and, perhaps more significantly, comparing the Onza postcranial osteology to that of other female pumas, particularly the limb bones. Although the latter may be more difficult, as nobody has every studied limb bone length variation in pumas, Best and Greenwell think this may be one of the keys to determining how different the Onza really is from the puma. The puma skeletons that do exist are scattered around at different universities and museums, however, and the job of measurement and statistical analysis could take some

time.

The other component is the biochemical, first involving electrophoresis. This is a method of protein analysis in which an electric current is run across a wet surface on which particles have been placed, causing molecular fragments to be drawn at different rates, or to "migrate," towards the oppositely charged electrode. Tissue or blood from different animal species show different rates of protein particle migration, making a biochemical distinction between species possible.

Another, more sophisticated technique which Best and Greenwell hope will be applied to the Onza material is immunological response analysis. Unlike morphological structures, whose rates of evolutionary change vary according to environmental factors, protein molecules change at a relatively constant rate, providing a kind of "molecular clock" against which the genetic distance between species can be measured. A new technique called radioimmunoassay (RIA) permits the measurement of very low concentrations of proteins. With this tech-



German mammalogist Helmut Hemmer comparing Onza and puma ulnas at the University of Arizona in April, 1986. (ISC photo.)

nique, antisera to certain proteins are raised in rabbits, and then placed in a container with the protein to be "measured." Each antiserum is highly specific to the protein of only one species; thus, an immunological reaction determines the identity of the species being tested for, or at least its molecular "distance" from other, known species.

In all such biochemical analyses--just as with the osteological approach--the results themselves are of little use without comparative data. Thus, tissues from a number of puma individuals will need to be analyzed in the same way, so that the biochemical differences between Onza and puma--if any--can be determined.

Now that a specimen has been obtained--a rare event in modern cryptozoology -- investigations are shifting from the search for further evidence of the Onza's existence to the determination of what the animal is.

Helmut Hemmer, a West German mammalogist and big cat specialist at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, proposed in 1984 the exciting idea that the Onza may be a modern representative of the Pleistocene North

American cheetah Acinonyx (Miracinonyx) trumani. This fossil cat was differentiated in the 1970's from other puma fossil species by, among other things, its longer limbs, a cheetah trait allowing more efficient cursorial locomotion. However, Greenwell took the Vega and Carpenter Onza skulls to Berkeley to compare them with the Pleistocene fossils in the custody of Daniel Adams, currently in the Department of Paleontology at the University of California.

Although there were some interesting similarities, significant differences clearly demonstrated that the Onza is not a living example of Acinonyx trumani. Dr. Hemmer was sent casts of the two Onza skulls, and he concurred that his original hypothesis was incorrect.

Nevertheless, although the Onza is more puma-like than cheetah-like, this does not preclude the possibility that it may represent some transitional form, fossils of which have simply not been recovered. Dr. Adams believes, furthermore, that pumas and cheetahs are very close genetically, and, if one goes back far enough, it is pointless to talk of the two different forms, as they were essentially the same animal. Dr. Adams agrees that the two Onza skulls be examined (prior to the Rodriguez Onza dissection) can be differentiated from puma skulls in some subtle features (see Winter, 1985, Newsletter).

Dr. Hemmer, meanwhile, visited Tucson in April, 1986, and examined the new Rodriguez Onza bones. He is convinced that the Onza is not a normal puma. Working with Greenwell and Best, he hopes to help resolve the question of what it is.

With a complete specimen having been made available for scientific investigation, theor-

izing about the affinities of the Onza can now move from the speculative to--hopefully--the definitive, an enviable position for any cryptozoological claim. Once a final assessment is made, it will end a long and fascinating controversy, extending back to the time of the Spanish conquest of Mexico in 1519.

Early Spanish chroniclers made note of a third big cat in Mexico, distinct from both the puma and jaguar. It was described as the most wolf-like of the New World cats, with long, slender legs. The Aztecs called it cuitlemiztli. After Cortes' visit to Montezuma's palace and his extensive zoo (later all destroyed), one of his men, Bernal Diaz del Castillo, wrote of seeing "...tigers, and lions of two kinds, one of which resembled the wolf..."

What is thought to be the same animal was later named onza by Spanish settlers in northwest Mexico. Although it may not appear in modern dictionaries, the Spanish word onza, derived from the Latin term uncia, originally referred specifically to the Afro-Asian cheetah, implying that this New World cat did, indeed, have long "wolf-like" legs like the cheetah.

The first recorded mention of the Onza by a Jesuit chronicler occurred in the 1700's. Father Ignaz Pfefferkorn was posted to Sonora in 1757, and worked with the Pima, Eudebe and Opata Indians for 11 years, until the Spanish Crown expelled all Jesuit missionaries from Mexico. He spoke of "...the animal which the Spaniards call onza is in shape almost like the animal [puma] just described. However, it has a longer body, which is also noticeably thinner and narrower.... It is not as timid as the [puma], and he who ventures too attack it must be well on his guard."

Another Jesuit missionary,

Father Johann Jakob Baegert, who worked with the Guaricura Indians in Baja California between 1751 and 1768, wrote: "The leopards [pumas] resemble the tigers [jaguars] in almost everything.... The onzas have longer bodies than the leopards [pumas].... One onza dared to invade my neighbor's mission while I was visiting, and attacked a 14-year-old boy in broad daylight and practically in full view of all the people; and a few years ago another killed the strongest and most respected soldier in [Baja] California." Father Francisco Javier Claviego, a leading Jesuit scholar in 18th-century Mexico, also wrote that, in Baja California, there existed "a certain wild animal similar in color to the American lions, although less fleshy than they, which the Spaniards of [Baja] California improperly call onza."

Over a century later, F. T. Davila, writing in 1894, noted its presence in Sonora again: "...the jaguar, the leopard [puma] and the onza [are found] in the same [location]...."

However, the little zoological field investigation done in Mexico up to that time had cast no new light on the Onza. Both American and Mexican zoologists, if they heard of it at all, assumed it to be just a normal puma. The similarity between the term Onza and the scientific name for the jaguar, Panthera onca, only added to the confusion in later decades when an American writer, with little knowledge of Spanish, assumed onca was pronounced onsa.

It was at this stage in the history of the Onza when Dale Lee entered the picture. The six Lee brothers were raised in the early part of the century in the mountains of southeast Arizona, and they were all expert hunters before they were adults. This eventually led to their fame as hunting guides and out-



Dale Lee (right) with his brother, Clell and the Shirk Onza shot in Sinaloa in 1938. The Lee's claim that the cat was not a puma was dismissed at the time. (Dale Lee photo.)

fitters, which would take them to many remote parts of the United States, Mexico, and Central and South America. They developed their own breed of bear and large cat hounds, and wealthy American sportsmen often commissioned their services.

It was in the 1930's, while hunting in the rugged mountains of Sonora, that Clell and Dale Lee first heard tales about the Onza from the local inhabitants, who gave the usual description: a general resemblance to the leon, but swifter, more aggressive, and harder to hunt than both the leon and the tigre. The Lees paid little attention to such native talk. Soon afterwards, they moved their operation about 500 miles further south, to Sinaloa, teaming up with Pancho Ferreira, owner of the San Miguel Ranch (today owned by the Urquijos) for fielding tiger hunts. Ferreira and other reliable locals seemed much more acquainted with the Onza, and the Lees began to pay more attention to the stories.

In 1938, the Lees took a client, banker Joseph H. Shirk of Peru, Indiana, to the San Ignacio District of Sinaloa to

hunt jaguars on La Silla Mountain—only a few miles from the area where the Rodriguez Onza was shot a half century later. The San Ignacio District is generally characterized by subtropical scrub in the lowlands, and subtropical to semi-arid vegetation at higher elevations, where the Onza are supposedly found. Wildlife is abundant, including many jaguar, and the terrain in the mountains could be described as "rough." Vehicles are useless, and even horses cannot negotiate many areas, so transportation is only possible by mule or donkey, often at a slow rate of a few miles per day.

After failing to find jaguar sign, the Lees set the dogs on another animal that had answered their jaguar calls the previous night. After a half hour, the dogs treed a big cat, and the party followed cautiously. From a distance of 50 yards, they observed the cat in a furious display, which they later described as quite unlike a puma. Mr. Shirk shot at it, but the bullet only hit a hind leg, knocking the animal out of the tree. The cat went up over a ravine, its shattered leg

flapping over its back, at a speed which left the hounds far behind. But the cat was eventually treed again, and this time shot dead.

The Lees examined the cat. It was much slimmer--but longer--than a puma. The ears were very long, and so were the legs. It was unlike anything they had seen before. The animal was measured and photographed, and was then butchered and lost to science forever. (The skin and skull were kept by Mr. Shirk, but their current whereabouts are not known--see Newsletter, Winter, 1985.)

Upon their return to Arizona, the Lees announced their find, expecting zoologists to take an interest in it. Instead, they were disbelieved and ridiculed, both in the media and in private correspondence. Stung by the



Dale Lee in the 1980's. A veteran of hundreds of puma kills, he still maintains that the cat he shot in 1938 was not a puma, and hopes that the newly acquired specimen will vindicate him. (Robert McCurry photo.)

negative reaction, the Lees, always very reserved people, withdrew from further discussion of the topic--for almost half a century--and the incident was quickly forgotten when World War II displaced all other matters. Dale Lee saw active war service in Europe, and later returned to his lifelong passion: hunting.

In the 1950's, Arizonan Robert Marshall began studying the problem of the Onza. He befriended Dale Lee, spent much time in Mexico gathering more information--and a purported Onza skull--and generally became the authority on the subject. His book, The Onza, was published by Exposition Press in 1961, and is now hard to find. In it, Mr. Marshall summarized everything known on the Onza up to that time, including early history, origin of the name, the history of the Lee brothers, and his own experiences searching for the Onza in both Sonora and Sinaloa.

Mr. Marshall, now 70, laments that his book had little impact on scientific thinking. It received poor reviews in at least one scholarly journal. It seemed that the time was not yet right for scientific attention, and the Onza had to wait another quarter of a century to receive it.

Dale Lee, now almost 80, is the last of the Lee brothers. He is considered the American hunter par excellence, one of the last of a disappearing breed. In a career which has spanned most of the 20th Century, he has hunted and killed almost 500 puma, about 300 black bear, and, with his brothers, over 120 jaguar. With declining animal populations and increased conservation measures, such figures will probably never be attained again by anyone. Despite how one may feel about his hunting successes, it has to be admitted that his experience--and thus his statements--are not to be taken lightly.



The Shirk cat killed in 1938 (above), and the Rodriguez cat killed in 1986, both in the area of La Silla Mountain, in the rugged Sierra Madre Occidental of northwest Mexico. The heads of the cats are so similar they could practically be of the same individual. (Dale Lee/ISC photos.)

To this day, Dale Lee maintains that the Shirk cat shot in 1938 was not a puma, and that he has hunted and skinned enough pumas to know the difference. In March of 1986, Mr. Lee met with Mr. Marshall and Mr. Greenwell to examine the new Rodriguez evidence. In looking at the photos of the Rodriguez Onza, he recalled the Shirk Onza having even longer and narrower legs, although the body and head seemed about the same. In fact, the heads of the two cats could practically be of the same individual (see accompanying photos).

Now, 48 years later, Dale Lee and Robert Marshall have new hope that they will, after all, be vindicated within their lifetimes, and that the Onza's pedigree, all the way back to Montezuma's lost zoo, will become firmly established. □

JARED DIAMOND TACKLES CRYPTOZOOLOGY

In November of 1981, news bulletins reported on the claimed rediscovery of the supposedly long-extinct yellow-fronted gardener bowerbird (*Amblyornis flavifrons*) in New Guinea. The discoverer was Jared Diamond, a physiologist and ornithologist at the University of California at Los Angeles. His find created quite a sensation (see Newsletter, Spring, 1982), and he later wrote up a technical report, which was published in Science (Vol. 216:431-34, April 23, 1982).

Although the report was generally accepted by other ornithologists, Dr. Diamond could not produce photographs of the rediscovered bowerbird because his dugout had capsized and his camera and film were lost (a theme common in cryptozoology). However, good hand-drawn illustrations were published. Considered a likely candidate for membership in ISC, which was just being formed, Dr. Diamond was sent membership material.

Although he did not join the Society, he became interested enough in the subject to eventually write an article on it, but not interested enough--by his own admission--to examine any of the Society's publications. His article, "In Quest of the Wild and Weird," appeared in the March, 1985, issue of the popular science magazine Discover, published by Time, Inc. (This same magazine had not long before published allegations in its September, 1984, issue claiming that the famous underwater Nessie flipper photo taken by the Rines team in 1972 had been "retouched"--see Newsletter, Winter, 1984, and Cryptoletters, Newsletter, Summer, 1985).

The article begins by stating that there would be "nothing" wrong with cryptozoology if it

did not concentrate on what he called the Big Four: Nessie, the Yeti, Sasquatch, and Mokele-Mbembe (a perusal of ISC publications by the Editor has failed to find anything more than a passing reference to the Yeti). Dr. Diamond then points out that, in the 3 years since the Society was formed, the animals in question "continue to elude cryptozoologists ... despite extensive searches into the globe's biological nooks and crannies."

Dr. Diamond continues: "Each new year brings fresh clues and tantalizing reports: a grotesquely large footprint discovered in the north country, a fleeting glimpse of some mysterious creature in the mountains or jungle.... Inevitably they [cryptozoologists] return with more provocative reports from natives, underexposed photographs of suggestive shapes, and tragicomic accounts of amazing beasts whose carcasses rotted away in the hot tropical sun before they could be preserved. With everything, that is, except proof." As Dr. Diamond provides no specifics, it is difficult to check on all of these allegations, but readers may examine the Society's publications easily enough.

Hethen states that "it's easy to ridicule cryptozoologists ... their literature is filled with implausible claims ... gullibly accepted second-hand accounts ... and possibly fraud." He then continues: "Not only do cryptozoologists fail at their goals, but their goals are also badly out of scientific fashion...today, as biology concentrates on the study of DNA, any scientists so naive as to seek big new species are viewed professionally as embarrassing anachronisms."

As has been discussed at length in the Society's jour-

nals, cryptozoology is concerned with supposed animals for which there already exists some testimonial or cultural evidence, regardless of their size; the fact that many such supposed animals are "big" is incidental and a separate point. Obviously, larger animals are more likely to be noted, observed, and/or culturally recorded.

Dr. Diamond appears to have based his perception of cryptozoology on information generated by the popular media, not on scholarly publications, and this could be considered a serious failing by a professional scientist.

Concerning his point that the modern emphasis is on molecular biology--which could leave one wondering why he himself has gone on repeated ornithological expeditions into New Guinea--Roy Mackal, ISC Vice President, is not happy about being labeled an "embarrassing anachronism," particularly because, ironically, and unknown to Dr. Diamond, Dr. Mackal's early biochemical research helped pave the way for later advances leading to genetic engineering.

Dr. Diamond then stated his assurance that new species discoveries by the end of the century will not include Sasquatch, Nessie, or dinosaurs. However, he excludes the Yeti from this assessment, as "an experienced zoologist" has told him about "tantalizing droppings and footprints in the Himalayas." He concludes by stating: "With this possible [Yeti] exception, the optimism of cryptozoologists seems doubly misplaced. While they seek monsters that probably don't exist, they ignore new discoveries of important smaller creatures...and they ignore the chance to study known animals that are now vanishing." No specifics are provided in these allegations.

Dr. Diamond's parting thoughts concern the thousands of species destined to perish by destruction of habitat--as if cryptozoology is somehow to blame. Many of his comments are reminiscent of recent published statements by Yale biologist Alvin Novick, Princeton ecologist Robert May, Ohio State University zoologist Tim Berra, and the late University of Arizona evolutionist George Gaylord Simpson (see, respectively, Newsletters for Spring, 1982, Spring, 1984, Summer, 1984, and Winter, 1984).

Buoyed by the success of this article, Dr. Diamond was back in Discover the following month, this time turning his talents to the evolution of sex in an article entitled "Everything Else You Always Wanted To Know About Sex" (excerpt: "Our sexual anatomy and behavior--including the urge to commit adultery--stem from an atavistic compulsion to maximize our progeny...").

Even Discover's new Managing Editor, Gilbert Rogin, could not contain himself, in his monthly editorial, in heaping further praise on Dr. Diamond. He notes that "there is a widespread assumption in academia that a person who writes well somehow disqualifies himself as a serious scientist. This emphatically isn't true in Diamond's case."

Two months later, Dr. Diamond published what could be described as a more scholarly piece, in Nature, although it contained much of the same information ("How Many Unknown Species Are Yet To Be Discovered?" -- very similar to the title of Bernard Heuvelmans' article in Vol. 2 of Cryptozoology, which was, "How Many Animal Species Remain To Be Discovered?"). Again, he emphasizes how, despite cryptozoology --and, presumably, the discovery of New Guinea bowerbirds--the study of molecules is the trend, and searches for new species are

outmoded."

After mentioning cryptozoology's "fixation on finding mythical large species," and its "desire for monsters," Dr. Diamond addresses the discovery of new mammal species in this century, presenting two listings. The first shows the geographical regions where new mammal genera have been discovered (the Neotropics wins with 31, followed by Africa, 27, the Orient, 20, and New Guinea, 19), and the second, the decade-by-decade breakdown of discoveries of new mammal genera. This tabulation, based on other literature, is similar to that published by George Gaylord Simpson in 1984 in his critique of cryptozoology in the Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society ("Mammals and Cryptozoology," Vol. 128[1]:1-19). However, numerous decade totals are different, and the century total reaches 134 genera, versus 126 for Simpson (see "Evolutionist Simpson Criticizes Cryptozoology," Newsletter, Winter, 1984). Diamond's decade totals are: 1900-09 = 42; 1910-19 = 23; 1920-29 = 24; 1930-39 = 12; 1940-49 = 7; 1950-59 = 8; 1960-69 = 9; 1970-79 = 8; 1980-82 = 1.

It is not at all clear why Dr. Diamond entitled his article "How Many Unknown Species..." when he deals primarily with genera in the body of the article. In a communication to the Editor, ISC President Bernard Heuvelmans, a mammalogist, concluded that this was done "to minimize the enormous number of new species which have been discovered. New species of mammals are only referred to when the author wants to emphasize that only small terrestrial mammals and whales have been recently discovered."

In addition, Dr. Diamond states that no new genera of primates or carnivores have been discovered since early in the century, leaving the impression

with the reader that no new primates and carnivores have been found. For cryptozoology, which operates at the species (or sometimes subspecies) level, such pronouncements have little impact. Furthermore, the statement that no new large terrestrial mammal species has been discovered since the kouprey in 1937 is incorrect. Dr. Diamond, an ornithologist, also devotes part of his Nature article to new bird discoveries, noting, incorrectly, that no new duck species have been found in the last 50 years.

The Editor had the opportunity to discuss some of these problems with Dr. Diamond during a Pleistocene extinctions conference held at the University of Arizona in late 1985. Dr. Diamond acknowledged that he had not bothered to examine any of the Society's publications prior to preparing the Discover article. The Editor mentioned how some Society members had expressed unease about his remarks concerning "provocative reports" and "underexposed photographs," when he himself had returned from New Guinea with no more evidence of a surviving bowerbird than his own word. "Oh, but that was different," responded Dr. Diamond, "I brought back tape recordings of its call."

"It is a safe rule to apply that, when a mathematical or philosophical author writes with a misty profundity, he is talking nonsense."

Alfred North Whitehead
An Introduction to Mathematics,
Oxford University Press, Oxford,
1948.

"If only I could break my leg, what a lot of scientific work I could do."

T. H. Huxley
In Cyril Bibby, T. H. Huxley,
Cambridge University Press,
London.

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

This issue features what may be the most significant cryptozoological find since the Society was founded 4 years ago; that is, the acquisition of a complete specimen of an Onza, the legendary Mexican cat which may have been overlooked by zoology because of its resemblance in coloration and size to the puma, Felis concolor.

The Onza may not be as famous as Nessie or Bigfoot, but it has, nevertheless, been the subject of ongoing cryptozoological investigation for almost 50 years, and the first report is believed to have been made by one of Cortes' own men during the Spanish conquest of Mexico, almost 500 years ago. Whether the Onza is a new species, a new

subspecies of puma, or some sort of genetic peculiarity, is too early to say; much more work needs to be done by the investigators--of which I am one. But it is nice to have a specimen for a change, although I'm sad for the individual cat itself, as I would be for any animal.

One of the first things pointed out by critics and detractors of the Society, unfairly, I think, is that no cryptozoological animals have been proven to exist since its formation--as if that was suddenly and magically supposed to happen. No society can discover anything. Breakthroughs are made by individuals, and, as Roy Mackal once put it, "if nobody does anything, nothing is going

to happen." If the Onza does turn out to be a new species, as we hope it might, that is one less argument from the detractors we will have to contend with. But I'm sure they will come up with new ones.

Speaking of critics, this issue also contains the thoughts of Jared Diamond. Dr. Diamond states that "it's easy to ridicule cryptozoologists," and indeed it is, if one wants to take the "easy" way out. Personally, I prefer an alternative approach: studying the literature, using logic and objectivity, and avoiding unnecessary cynicism. This approach may be more difficult, and some may call it more scientific, but actually it's simply more fun.

J. Richard Greenwell
Editor

NEWS & NOTES

News and Notes is a regular column which carries brief news capsules of cryptozoological interest. Readers are encouraged to send in suitable items for possible use in the column.

Tenticular Ending. About the same time as a Bermuda deep-sea fisherman was losing crab traps to a presumed giant octopus (see Newsletter, Autumn, 1985), reports from New Zealand stated that two South Pacific fishermen had been killed by giant octopuses which held them underwater until they drowned.

The Associated Press carried a report on September 10, 1984, from the New Zealand Herald, which stated that the Kiribati fishermen were hunting octopuses when the event occurred. Reportedly, the fishermen, armed with spears, allow the octopuses to cling to them, so they can bring them to the surface and kill them "by biting a nerve between the eyes." In this case, however, the tables were turned on

the unfortunate fishermen.

Babera Kirata, Minister of Natural Resources of Kiribati, an equatorial republic of 33 islands scattered across 2,400 miles of the Pacific, stated that the octopuses were 9 to 12 feet "long," far larger than those traditionally hunted by the islanders. It is uncertain what "long" means in this case; if it means the maximum length of the arms, it would give the animals a radial spread of about 25 feet, still generally within the maximum range of the largest known species, without having to invoke a new species. Nevertheless, concluded Minister Kirata, "we are going to have to find another way of killing octopuses."

Some Like It Cold. Writing in the July 19, 1984, issue of Nature, Japanese zoologist Shiro Koshima reported on his discovery of "the coldest insect habitat in the world," at 18,000 feet on Nepal's Yala Glacier, not far from Mount Everest. Dr. Koshima, from Kyoto University, discovered a species of midge

which spends its entire life cycle in the snow and ice, which is unique for an insect.

It was found that the tiny midge, which has short wings and is incapable of flight, remains active at 3°F. Its larvae feed on bacteria and algae in melt-water drainage channels under the ice. Small wingless insects are found in Antarctic mountains, but they do not actually live in the ice, as does the new midge from Nepal.

Who's Your Insurance Company?

It is almost unheard of for any self-respecting British Columbia lake not to harbor its very own "monster," which is usually embodied in the legends of local Indian populations, as well as in sighting reports by Anglo-Canadian residents. Shuswap Lake, in central British Columbia, is no exception. The latest sighting reported was by a Kamloops family on June 3, 1984, while sailing on the lake. Linda Griffiths spotted churning water about 300 feet away, and then observed an animal through binoculars. "I could see seven

dark greyish bumps out of the water," she stated. "It looked like a snake, but it moved in a straight line [in water, reptiles generally move laterally, and mammals vertically--Editor]. It was 20 to 25 feet long, and was moving quite fast."

The animal was also observed without binoculars by Mrs. Griffiths' two children, David, 15, and Robert, 12, and Gregory Plummer, 13, a friend, but all reported the bumps. None of the witnesses claim to have seen the head. The animal created a wake, estimated at 7 inches high, and it crossed in front of the boat before submerging. "I never believed in things like monsters in the water, but I believe it now," she stated, adding, "I was flabbergasted. It took a while for me to calm down. That's it for me as far as swimming goes." There was reportedly no wind at the time of the sighting, with the lake's surface "like glass."

Helen Akrigg, a local historian, stated that there had been a number of "queer sightings" in the past, and Duncan Myers, of the Thompson-Shuswap Tourist Bureau, stated that, if further sightings occur, he would consider offering a reward for proof of its existence. "There have been reports of a strange thing in the lake for several years now," he stated. "I think there is every possibility of some unusual life in the lake."

Mr. Myers' reward, if made, would be a direct challenge to the Okanagan-Similkameen Tourist Association's reward offer of \$1 million (Canadian) for proof of Ogopogo, the more famous supposed resident of Lake Okanagan (see Newsletter, Spring, 1984). Insurance against having to actually pay the Ogopogo reward was underwritten by Lloyds of London, but presumably proof of the less well-known Shuswap Lake Monster--which does not yet even have a nickname--would not

require such a hefty reward.

The Snowman Returneth. The Summer, 1985, Newsletter reported on Soviet explorer Vadim Ranov's criticisms of Yeti and Snowman reports in the Soviet Union (see "Abominable Snowjob?" News and Notes). This Newsletter carries a letter from British scholar Michael Heaney, who explains that the terms "Yeti" and "Snowman" are used interchangeably in the Soviet Union to refer to both the Himalayan reports and the Soviet accounts (even though they may represent different species).

Since the negative comments by Mr. Ranov, who is a member of the Soviet Geographical Society, more positive statements have been made by another Soviet explorer named Andrei Kozlov, who reportedly has led expeditions of the Alpine Expedition Department of the Soviet Geographical Society for 13 years. In a December, 1984, interview with the Soviet newspaper Socialist Industry--quoted by the Washington Post--Mr. Kozlov stated that the Alpine Expedition Department has been collecting reports from the Caucasus and Tyan-Shan Mountains since the 1960's. There have been about 5,000 sighting reports of the alleged creature, and about 50 plaster casts have been made of its supposed footprints.

Mr. Kozlov stated that the Soviet wildmen--referred to as "relic hominoids"--stand about 2 meters tall, weigh about 200 kilograms, live alone, and inhabit mountain forests, but not above the snowline, making the term "Snowman"--which originated with the British in Nepal--an inappropriate one. Based on the reports he has studied, Mr. Kozlov has deduced that the creature spends its days in a temporary bed of grass and branches, and forages or hunts at night.

Disputing Mr. Ranov's remarks, Mr. Kozlov believes the Snowman is, in fact, some sort of relic form of Neanderthal Man, which has regressed culturally and socially because of the rapid advances of Homo sapiens. This is the same conclusion reached by other Soviet researchers affiliated with ISC, namely Honorary Member Marie-Jeanne Koffmann, and Dmitri Bayanov and Igor Bourtsev, who organize the Relic Hominoid Research Seminar at the Darwin Museum (neither of these individuals nor the museum are mentioned in the Washington Post article, and their relationship with Mr. Kozlov is not known).

During the interview, Mr. Kozlov admitted that he and members of his team had become used to criticism and cynicism. He also stated that the Soviet media had sensationalized the reports, and that "when information about the work of our expeditions appears in the popular press without qualified explanations, it gives rise to unhealthy sensation." Mr. Kozlov concluded that the only way to prove the Snowman's existence conclusively is to capture one.

Hippopoturtleox. The Associated Press reported in September, 1984, that Chinese soldiers had killed a strange animal living in a remote Tibetan lake named Duobuzhe in 1972. The animal, which was shot, bayoneted, and dragged to a nearby village, was reportedly ox-like, but had legs like a turtle's, short curly horns, and skin like a hippopotamus. Any questions?

"Nonetheless, I am, so far as I know, the first and possibly the only Minister for Science--or of science for that matter--in the Universe..."

Quintin Hogg (Lord Hailsham)
Science and Politics,
Faber and Faber, London, 1963.

CRYPTOLETTERS

The Editor welcomes letters from readers on any topic related to cryptozoology, but reserves the right to shorten them or to make slight changes to improve style and clarity, but not meaning.

To the Editor:

Concerning the claim that the Wilson photo of Nessie is an otter's tail (Newsletter, Winter, 1984), it does not look like it to me, from any angle. The size and shape of the object does not look consistent with an otter in any way. To me, it looks more distant, and it looks longer than 2 feet, 3 inches.

Louis Deadman
Pine Bluff, Arkansas, U.S.A.

To the Editor:

In your article "Evolutionist Simpson Criticizes Cryptozoology" (Newsletter, Winter, 1984), you conclude that the main problems in Simpson's criticism "seem to result from a general misconception of what cryptozoology is and what the purposes of the Society are." My question is: If Simpson was confused, why should less eminent critics be less so?

Perhaps some of the blame for this belongs with cryptozoologists themselves when they reach into the remote past for answers to the puzzles that confront them. Thus, we have plesiosaurs, archaic whales, pterodactyls, etc., put forward as hypothetical solutions to the problems of identification of zoological enigmas. While it is acceptable and proper to do this, and adds a sense of romance to the quest, it must give seekers of such mysteries a slightly dotty appearance in the eyes of others, even other scientists.

But the major part of the blame surely belongs with those in positions of influence and authority, who ought to know better. Perhaps, too, cryptozoology contains nonscientific elements disliked by members of a scientific caste who see intimations of their own immortality in every word they utter. An investigator of an unknown creature, a "cryptid," might rely on native accounts, presupposing trust and honesty on both sides in order to arrive at an acceptable plausible identification. This may assault the egos of the panjandrums and authorities trained to look upon such accounts with suspicion.

A solution to one of the great cryptozoological mysteries would certainly shock the "establishment" into wakefulness. In the meantime, only an attitude of humility on their part, with calm, educational efforts by the Society and others, will clarify the misconceptions in their minds.

John E. Wall
Altona, Manitoba, Canada

To the Editor:

You were mistaken in your comments on Soviet terminology and attitudes ("Abominable Snow-job?", News and Notes, Newsletter, Summer, 1985). No doubt Dmitri Bayanov will also be writing to you with his own comments, but a Western perspective may also be useful. My own understanding of the situation is based on several years of reading and researching Russian sources.

The terms "Abominable Snowman" and "Yeti" first appeared in the Soviet press in 1957, in reports of the supposed Himalayan creature. (The Russians soon dropped the "Abominable.") The reports produced letters from Soviet readers to the

effect that they, too, had seen such creatures. One notable report was from the Pamirs, and this was the spark which led to Boris Porshnev's work. It was Porshnev who uncovered and investigated the reports from within the Soviet Union; and in the popular press, at least, the two terms (particularly "Snowman") are used for all such reports. As for the attitude of the press, both favorable and skeptical articles appear, but the establishment view, which was being reported in this case, is dismissive.

Porshnev did indeed suggest that all reports of hairy bipeds in all continents, including America, could be explained as sightings of relic Neanderthaloids. The fact that the suggestion is implausible does not alter the fact that it was made. The most accessible of his works in the West which expound his theories are L'Homme de Neanderthal est Toujours Vivant, 1974 (with Bernard Heuvelmans) and "The Troglodytidae and the Homiidae in the Taxonomy and Evolution of Higher Primates" (with discussions and reply), Current Anthropology, 1974, Vol. XV: 449-456. The reply was by Dmitri Bayanov and Igor Burtsev, who, 2 years later, elaborated further on the views expressed (1976, Vol. XVII:312-18).

Michael Heaney
Bodleian Library
Oxford, England, U.K.

The Editor was not aware that the terms "Yeti" and "Snowman" are used -- apparently interchangeably--in the Soviet Union to refer to its own wildmen. Mr. Heaney's clarification is useful, and puts Mr. Ranov's criticisms in the proper context. At press time, no comments on this subject have been received from Dmitri Bayanov, but see "The Snowman Returneth," News and Notes, this issue, for an update from another Soviet mountaineer/explorer.--Editor.

WOOD'S ANIMAL FACTS

The largest and heaviest mammal in the world, and the largest marine animal ever recorded, is the blue whale or Sibbald's rorqual (Balaenoptera musculus). Two races are recognized: the northern blue whale (B. m. musculus) of the North Atlantic and North Pacific oceans, and the larger southern blue whale (B. m. intermedia) of the Southern Hemisphere.

The largest accurately measured blue whale on record (length taken in a straight line parallel to the body axis from the tip of the upper jaw to the notch in the tail flukes) was a female brought into the Cia. Argentina de Pesca shore station, South Georgia, sometime between 1904 and 1920, which measured 107 Norwegian fot (= 110 ft., 2.5 in. [33.59 m.]).

Seven other blue whales (all females) over 100 ft. (30.48 m.) in length were also taken in the Southern Ocean between 1922 and 1925. The largest specimen measured at South Georgia by the Tonsberg Whaling Company was 104 ft., 2 in. (31.75 m.) long and

had a maximum girth of 45 ft. (13.7 m.).

Shortly after World War I, a female blue whale measuring 102 ft. 4 in. (31.19 m.) was brought into the shore station at Donkergat, Saldanha Bay, Cape Province, South Africa, and another one processed there about the same time was longer than the 100-ft. (30.48-m.) flensing platform. Both whales were killed in Cape waters. According to the International Whaling Statistics, 13 blue whales measuring between 100 ft. and 102 ft. (30.48-31.09 m.) have been caught in the Southern Hemisphere since 1930.

The largest accurately measured northern blue whale on record was probably a 92-ft. (28-m.) female brought into the Balaena shore station, Hermitage Bay, Newfoundland, in May, 1903. In the North Pacific, the largest specimen in the 1919-1920 American catches was a female measuring 90 ft., 2 in. (27.48 m.).

During the early days of

whaling, lengths in excess of 100 ft. (30.5 m.) were reported for blue whales taken in northern waters, but these measurements were probably exaggerated or taken along the curves of the body. Included in this category are a 120-ft. (36.68-m.) specimen cast ashore near Utrecht, Holland, in c. 1547.

Although the bodies of whales are supported by the buoyancy of water, which distributes the compressive force over a broad area, even large rorquals cannot exceed certain dimensions. This is because the surface of the lungs, intestines, kidneys, etc. becomes relatively smaller with increases in body mass. Eventually . . . a point is reached where these organs can no longer cope with essential metabolic processes, and in the case of the blue whale the crunch probably comes somewhere between 110 ft. (33.5 m.) and 120 ft. (36.6 m.).

Abstracted from:

The Guinness Book of Animal Facts and Feats, by Gerald L. Wood. Guinness Superlatives, Enfield, U.K. (3rd ed.), 1982.

Honorary Members: Andre Capart (Belgium); Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer (South Africa); David James (United Kingdom); Marie-Jeanne Koffmann (Soviet Union); Ingo Krumbiegel (Federal German Republic); Theodore Monod (France); John R. Napier (United Kingdom); Sir Peter Scott (United Kingdom).

Benefactors: Robert C. Dorion (Guatemala); Michael T. Martin (United States); Gale J. Raymond (United States); Kurt Von Nieda (United States); Ned Winn (Switzerland); Bette and Joe Wolfskill (United States).

Corporate Sponsors:



The ISC Newsletter

International Society of Cryptozoology
P.O. Box 43070
Tucson, Arizona 85733
U.S.A.

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TUCSON, ARIZONA
PERMIT NO. 1786

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED
FORWARDING AND RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED